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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Time for a little personal venting! So okay, it's winter and the weather continues to be typical of New England. It's dreary. If I were 40 years younger, I'd be having a ball. Now, forget about it.

Secondly, I still hate peecees! I have four in my household, not to mention the plethora of Atari machines. My wife and I each have a desktop and a notebook. For awhile, I've been procrastinating putting in the additional RAM I bought some time ago. It wasn't something I "needed", so I was in no rush. However, I've wanted to add a CD-RW to my system, so I finally got one. Last weekend, I decided to add the memory and hook up the CD burner.

I finally figured out where the RAM chips were to be plugged in and did so. I mounted the CD burner in my last available tower slot, and secured it. Went to plug in the power adaptor and ribbon cable and discovered that I didn't have anywhere to plug either into. I knew I could get a Y-adaptor for the power, but I was uncertain as to what to do about the ribbon cable. I had some idea, but wasn't positive. So, I did the smart thing and decided to have someone more proficient do it. At least I now had 64 megs of RAM to enjoy, or so I thought.

I turned the PC on, and newly-added RAM wasn't recognized. Okay, maybe I did something wrong, so I pulled the chips. Since I was going to have someone do the burner, I'd have them so the RAM. I called a local dealer and made an appointment to drop by the next day. Then I went back to the PC and did a few things.

Next day, unhooked the PC and lugged the tower to the dealer. The guy plugged the RAM into the same two slots I had tried the day before. I was feeling a little better, I had done it right. He found the same problem with the power, and attached a Y-adaptor as I had figured needed done. He plugged the ribbon cable into another; I hadn't thought of that. Ten minutes and he's done. Let's check it out. He turns the machine on, the burner is recognized but the RAM isn't. Hmmmm. He pulls the chips and examines them. They're not the same type as my existing ones; one set has parity and the other doesn't. They won't work together. Fine, just give me another set. He doesn't have them, but can give me two 32-meg chipsets. Okay, having more than enough RAM can't hurt! He installs those, they're recognized, the machine boots fine. Pack up and go home to load the burner drivers!

I set the machine up, and power it on. Nothing. Reset. Nothing. Reset. It boots and loads. I do a few things and the machine locks up. Reset. Errors. Run ScanDisk. Errors. ScanDisk can't fix everything. Reboot. Errors. Registry Error, load back-up. Huh? I try a number of things and nothing. I check out my handy dandy troubleshooting manual. Registry errors aren't good. Load a back-up, it recommends. What back-up? I

wouldn't even know how! Alternative, re-install Windows and the registry will be re-built. Okay, not my favorite thing to do, but if it will work, why not.

But, I can't get to Windows because of the errors. Well, I can bypass Windows and boot into DOS mode and load Windows that way. Get in, run the setup program, and go directly to ScanDisk to check for errors before the program will load. Here we go again! Fine, ScanDisk finds some errors, I select "fix". ScanDisk finishes, tells me there are still errors, and I cannot install Windows until the errors are fixed. Say what! I tried a number of times with the same result. I brought the machine back to the dealer the following day.

To make a long story short, I brought the machine back to the dealer last Sunday. I picked it up Thursday! The 64 megs of memory I bought and installed - won't work. He removed it and put in 16 megs that would work. He couldn't resolve the registry error. He tried to re-load Windows a number of different ways. He finally had to copy all of my files to one of his drives, re-install Windows on my machine, and copy everything back to my machine - to a folder. Since I still had corrupted files somewhere, he couldn't copy everything back to its rightful place. So, all of my data is intact, but I'm likely not going to be able to run anything; I'll have to reinstall all of my programs. Okay, I guess that's better than not having my data or knowing what I had on the drive, formatting the drive and starting literally from nothing. I was told my hard drive was dying because he was having a problem copying everything back. I was tired and frustrated. I bought the drive he used, and kept it.

Money-wise, it was a wash. I should have fought for the lousy $35.00 that was really left as my credit, but he put it toward the labor and left it at that. As far as I'm concerned, they caused the problem, but I'm not an expert. Friends of mine in Information Services at work told me bad or wrong RAM chips could cause the problems I encountered. Anyway, I got the machine back and set it all up again last night.

I set it up, re-loaded my printer software, and installed the burner drivers. I was working on employee performance appraisals before all of this madness occurred, so I resumed them. I went to print the ones I had completed - printer won't print. Fine, maybe I didn't install the printer drivers correctly. I'll uninstall and re-install later - no time to play with it now. Let me throw the files onto a floppy and bring them to work and print them out there (and save myself some paper and ink!). Disk is write-protected - try new disk or remove write-protect. I don't write-protect my disks! Try another disk. Same thing. Try 5 more, brand new ones. Nada. Okay, maybe since these were files from the "bad" system, there was a problem. I tested that theory by loading Notepad, creating a test document, and attempted to save it to disk. No. Damn. I'm really ticked off now.

While at work today, I call the dealer and tell him the sad story. He can't understand why the floppy drive won't save. He noticed that sometimes he had to push the disk into the drive to make sure it was all the way in. Fine, but if that was the problem, I should not have been able to read a disk. True. Printer problem. Check the cables and re-install software. I'll try that, but I don't think it will work. If nothing works, bring it back.

So, here I sit, working on the faithful Atari Falcon! In 14 years I've never experienced anything this maddening with any of my Atari machines. Sure, hard drives have died, a chip came loose on occasion, but it was

always something that could be easily fixed. And if you kept back-ups, you could be back and in business fairly quickly. Putting in the wrong RAM chips will kill your machine?!?! Unbelievable! I know one thing, once everything is back to "normal", I plan to burn everything onto CDs so if something this drastic comes along again, I'll reformat the drive and just copy everything back. Peecees, I hate them!! And I apologize for going on forever relating this saga. But, I needed to vent to people who could likely relate! <grin>

Until next time...

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Aniplayer 2001 v2.14

Hi,

The latest version of Aniplayer is on my site.

News on this version 2001 (2.14):

- Format audio DVSM (Falcon Winrec).
- New scripts with GEMScript for convert a file MPEG or a directory.
- Virtual screen in True Color under FALCON (without GEM mode).
- MP3 DSP part more fast.
- Statistics DSP for MPEG Audio.
- Possibility to choice the sound track with some QuickTime files.
- New box for edit the Playlist when alignment is checked (entries for title, author, album...).
- The playlist now works with 3 digits and 256 entries.
- New look for the Playlist.
- Xgem protocol used for display icon in the window's title under MagiC (.SLB from Eric Reboux Software: http://ers.free.fr).
- The font selector replaces the little font option for the Playlist (MagiC or Wdialog compatible).
- Bugs with MP2 32000 Hz, MPEG Audio tag ID3 fixed, video MPEG, etc...
- And more...

Regards,
Didier.
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Didier MEQUIGNON Aniplayer download: http://aniplay.atari.org
E-mail: didier.mequignon@wanadoo.fr http://perso.wanadoo.fr/didierm/
Address: 25,rue de l'Ascenseur 62510 Arques FRANCE
Atari FALCON 030/CT2B 46Mb 13Go HD ~ ZIP100 ~ CD-ROM10X ~ MODEM V90

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Guess what! My newsgroup server is up and running again. Whew. No long-winded sermons this week. I'd like to thank the few of you who emailed me about last week's column... and the rest of you who DIDN'T. <grin>

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, winter seems to have hit a lull in this locale. The days have gone from quite cold to warmer than average and the snow we've gotten so far is just barely hanging on. I'm not foolish enough to think that this signals the start of spring, but it's nice to have a break from the cold, icy weather for a while.

The temperature here is really quite moderate compared to other places but, as with most things, it's what you're used to that counts. I went to college near one of the Great Lakes and was treated to lake-effect snow almost every morning during the winters. I found it somewhat unsettling, but to the local population it was just business as usual.

I guess that it's the same thing with computers. If all you've ever used is Windows you've probably never even thought about other possibilities for operating systems. A good many of us were puttering around with computers before Windows was even an evil little plan in Mr. Gates' head, so we know that there are other options, possibilities, and even philosophies out there. I can't count the number of times I've been asked "... but how do you do anything without windows?"

Of course, most computer users these days are just that... people who use computers. They're not computer hobbyists. And that's okay. Not everyone has to share our interest in these electronic marvels. It's enough for them that they can use their computers to enjoy whatever hobby they call their own.

Well, let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Lyndon Amsdon asks about his Falcon's clock:

"I'm a bit unsure what I have on my newly acquired Falcon :)

I have the Phantom accelerator but there seems to be the possibility of a clock patch already installed.

The telltale signs seem to be pin the track cut from pin 110 of the SDMA. A small wire is connected from the pin 110 and connected to pin 8 of 74**08 chip. Then pins 9 and 10 are bridged together and also wired up to the track that was once connected to pin 110 of the SDMA. Summing that up it's basically intercepting the track (that goes to pin 110) with an AND gate.

Sounds like a simple buffer to me, or is it something Atari fitted to make the computer work. If I removed it would the computer fail? The phantom has a clock modification with it which I'd rather use."

Dan Ackerman tells Lyndon:

"I could be wrong. It's been years since I've played with the guts of a Falcon. But it sounds somewhat like the Bass mod for the sound system that was atari prescribed. I wouldn't remove it unless you discovered that you needed to.

But I could be wrong. I'm just reading news waiting for friends to come over to go out to dinner."

Jo Even Skarstein adds:

"Yes, that's a kind of DMA patch. I haven't seen this version before, but it's definitely a DMA clock patch.

It's not an original Atari mod.

If SCSI and DMA sound works fine you shouldn't mess with the patch, because it's not always trivial to get it working perfectly. However, if you have SCSI/sound-problems, fix the cut track and install the Phantom clock patch. Accelerated Falcons usually require a different patch than standard."

Claes Holmerup tells Lyndon:

"The CPU-clock modification is in fact nothing but a buffer that cleans up the clock pulses, which originally are anything but the clean square wave they should have been...

Check out the CPU-clock modifications on my website and see which one it is.

Then you'll know how to set it back to it's normal, unmodified state again.

website: http://www.holmerup.com - mirrored at http://mirror.holmerup.com "

Bill Gaskill asks about some of the goings-on during the glory days:

"Does anyone know what the last four 'commandments' were that Jack Tramiel issued regarding the marketing of the Atari ST? I've only been able to uncover the first 6 from the magazines that I have in my collection. I've included the ones that I do have below.

During Tramiel's early days at Atari he brought out the ST line and surrounded it with a lot of fanfare and marketing hype. Among the most remembered hype was "The Atari Ten Commandments":

1. We shall create a computer that will be a landmark in the history of computers.

2. We shall create a computer that is as smart as the buy who buy it.

3. We shall create a computer that sets a new standard for speed and performance.

4. We shall create a computer that lets consumers choose what is right for them.

5. We shall create a computer that gives consumers power without the price.

6. We shall create a computer that is as powerful in the music studio as it is in the office.

7.

8.

9.

10."

Bob Retelle pretty much mirrors my thoughts for an Eleventh:

"11 - We shall create a computer as innovative and powerful as anything the world has ever seen, then fail to market it properly and let it die an ignominious death."

Mike Bedford asks about modifying graphics:

"Does anyone know of a program that can be used to colour tint grey-scale images?"

Edward Baiz tells Mike:

"Photoline and Smurf can do this."

Geoff Madden adds:

"I've use both Photoline and Apex Media to do this. Can be a bit troublesome in that you need to change Hue and or Saturation, but not brightness. Apex will not run on magicPC."

Bob King jumps in and adds:

"Yes Photoline will do this. The first thing to do, under Tools, is Convert Picture: Grey to RGB, you will see no change, but without this, any grey level will be replaced by the luminance level of the replacement colour ie another grey. Then grab the grey colour level you want to replace with the pippette.

Then go to Tools, Replace colour, pick up the pippette grey from the foreground pallette and drop it in the Source color box, set the tolerance. Do the same with the replacement colour and drop it in the Target color box, set tolerance, and execute. You will need a lot of trial and error, but it works."

Paul Lefebvre asks:

"I'm digging out some of my old ST software to use with GEMulator. I find that GEMulator is more reliable when I set it up to use a virtual hard disk instead of accessing my Windows drives directly.

The problem I am having is that if I use a virtual hard disk I cannot access the Windows drives and file folders at all. I would really like to be able to access both. I have some files on PD software CDs that I would like to transfer to the virtual hard drive, but I cannot see both the CD and the virtual hard drive at the same time. I also have

no easy way to copy a file I have downloaded with my PC to the Atari's virtual hard drive. Right now I'm copying stuff to a floppy, but this is slow.

Does anyone know of a good way to transfer files into an Atari virtual hard disk? Should I just stick with the Windows file system instead?"

Mike Saeger tells Paul:

"I had a Gemulator question and sent it off to Derick -- he answered me the next day! So go ahead and ask the developer directly. support@emulators.com. "

Paul tells Mike:

"I took your suggestion and e-mailed support. I got a reply within a few hours, but basically it just confirmed what I had run into and that there was no way to have both an Atari virtual HD and a real Windows HD available at the same time. He recommends going through the floppy to transfer files.

He did say I could install Atari software to read the CD, though.

Still, it seems to me that someone should be able to whip up a utility to copy files into a virtual hard drive file (or even a virtual floppy file)."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Sega To Dump The Dreamcast?
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Sony Scores Game Developers!
  Typing of the Dead! NBA Live!
  And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Sega Reportedly Halts Dreamcast

Sega Corp. is reportedly planning to stop the production of its Dreamcast game console by the end of March, focusing its efforts on developing and supplying its home software games to such rival companies as Sony Computer Entertainment and Nintendo Co.

Sega will no longer accept new orders for Dreamcast, instead only assembling units from parts in inventory, according to a story in Tokyo-based The Nihon Keizai Shimbun’s Wednesday edition.

Sega of America issued a statement late Tuesday, saying the company does not comment on rumors.

Sega ‘‘globally reaffirms its commitment to Dreamcast. In fact, Sega has more than 100 games worldwide coming out for the platform in the next year." Industry analysts, however, said such moves would make sense, though and could help reverse the fortunes of the company, which has been struggling with sluggish sales for the past several years.

The Tokyo-based Sega, which trails behind Sony Corp. and Nintendo in U.S. market share for consoles, was expected to benefit from Sony’s well-publicized shortages of PlayStation 2, introduced in the U.S. last October, and Sega Dreamcast’s new online connection.

Last fall, Sega slashed prices of its Dreamcast console to $149, from $199, and offered $150 rebates to spur sales.

However, revenues of Dreamcast were disappointing for the holiday season, as consumers appeared to be holding off their purchases of consoles until new models came out. Later this year, Microsoft Corp., armed with a $500 million worldwide marketing budget, will be launching its Xbox video game player, and Nintendo will be unveiling GameCube.

U.S. sales of Dreamcast, launched in the fall of 1999, totaled 4.5 million units through December, running below the company’s plan to reach 7.5 million units by March 31, according to the Gartner Group, a research firm based in San Jose, California.

‘‘Sega was hoping that its game experience would draw some of those Sony loyalists to their camp, but it hasn’t worked," said P.J. McNealy, an analyst at Gartner. ‘‘Focusing on game software makes sense given how competitive the console market is getting. Sega has strong leverage in the software games area."

The video game industry struggled with weak sales last year. Sales of game consoles plummeted 20 percent in 2000 to $1.1 billion from $1.4 billion in 1999, according to Port Washington, N.Y.-based NPD Interactive Entertainment. Sales in the total category, which also includes accessories and software, declined 5 percent to $6.5 billion last year from the previous year’s $6.9 billion.

Sega Says Committed to Dreamcast Console Business

Video game maker Sega Corp., which is facing severe competition from rivals, said on Tuesday it was committed to its game console operations after a Japanese daily newspaper reported Sega would exit that business.

Wednesday’s edition of the Nihon Keizai Shimbun economic daily, monitored

in New York on Tuesday, said Sega would stop producing its Dreamcast game console by the end of March, focusing on developing and marketing game software instead. But the U.S. arm of the Japanese company said it would support the console, noting in a statement, ‘‘ ...that the company globally reaffirms its commitment to Dreamcast."

‘‘In fact, Sega has more than 100 games worldwide coming out for the platform in the next year. It is not Sega’s policy to comment on rumors and the company has not made any statement regarding ceasing manufacturing of Dreamcast or development for other video game platforms," the company added.

Sega competes fiercely with Nintendo Co. Ltd. and Sony Computer Entertainment. Sony Computer, maker of the popular PlayStation 2, is an affiliate of electronics company Sony Corporation.

Last November, Sega reported a 17.98 billion yen ($153 million) net loss for the April-September period, largely due to hefty cuts in overseas sale prices of the Dreamcast game console.

On Monday, a report said Sega was to unveil a business plan this month to supply software for Sony and possibly Microsoft Corp’s upcoming game console system ‘‘XBox."

A Sega spokeswoman earlier in Japan said the company had nothing to add currently to an announcement it made in October, when it said it planned to provide software for rival game systems but would not withdraw from the Dreamcast hardware business.

Console Dream Is Over For Sega

It only took Sega ten years and more than $1 billion in losses to figure out that it should focus on what it does well--creating and selling game software.

Let’s hope it moves a little more quickly from now on. The Japanese company admitted today that it may abandon its Dreamcast console so that it can make games for its former rivals and license the Sega architecture to other hardware companies.

Sega is considering restructuring Dreamcast hardware operations worldwide next year and ‘‘ending Dreamcast console production is one of the options," according to a spokesperson. It won’t make a final decision until later this month, but it seems likely the company will stop producing the $150 machines at the end of March.

You can almost hear the collective sigh of relief; Sega’s shares popped 15% on the long-awaited news, despite the fact that the Nikkei was down today. They rose more than 18% yesterday when initial rumors about the plan surfaced, and Sega’s only formal response was that ‘‘Sega has more than 100 games worldwide coming out for the platform in the next year." No denial there.

The company’s shares will recover even more if Sega can quickly close partnerships with Sony and Microsoft. Sega already has a deal in place to make software for Nintendo’s handheld machines, and it is in discussions to develop titles for Nintendo’s and Sony’s consoles. But a deal with Microsoft

is attractive simply because the company needs it; Sony and Nintendo do not.

Sega could strike some attractive licensing deals over the next year, since the Redmond, Wash., company is racing the clock to produce a sophisticated library of games for its Xbox console by the next holiday season. Xbox is a promising hunk of hardware, but Microsoft needs more impressive games to take on Sony's Playstation II. The Sony name is a much more popular brand among gamers than Microsoft, which is known for its stodgy desktop applications, not its PC and online games.

Sega loyalists may shudder at the deal, but it's clear that the company is finally admitting defeat. For years it has produced lovely, quirky games--but too much, too soon. For example, Dreamcast was the first 128-bit machine, but its parts proved too expensive. Sega has also failed to win over third-party developers and key resellers like Kmart and Blockbuster. When Sony came out with its marginally superior PlayStation 2, it quickly eclipsed Dreamcast in the mass market, although Dreamcast isn't the bomb that the infamous Sega Saturn was. Sega has about 10% of the $3 billion U.S. console game hardware market, while Sony controls more than two-thirds.

''This would be a wise move for them," says Roger Lanctat, videogame analyst with PC Data in Reston, Va. ''They've been dancing with the elephants and getting stomped, even though they tried to be first with 128-bit and the Internet connection."

The company was on the bleeding edge with its online efforts, which have also suffered from bad timing. Nobody is ready for them, and Sega lacks the resources of Electronic Arts and AOL Time Warner, which have their own ambitious plans for online game networks.

Dreamcast fans can take consolation in the fact that the gaming industry is notoriously unpredictable. Just last month, reports abounded that Nintendo was going to buy Sega; it doesn't look like that will happen. Dreamcast could get reincarnated as a set-top box or entertainment console from a company like Microsoft.

The only certainty--a delight to shareholders, but a minor tragedy to hard-core gamers--is that Sega is finally going from dreamy to practical.

Interplay Presents a Giant for the PlayStation2!

Digital Mayhem, a division of Interplay Entertainment Corp., announced that the popular and critically-acclaimed Action/Adventure PC game, Giants: Citizen Kabuto is being developed for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. On the PlayStation 2 system, Giants: Citizen Kabuto will take full advantage of the machine's high technical specifications, including its ability to display massive amounts of polygons. Richly detailed character models, as well as smooth and more organic-looking world models will join with all-new effects to completely transfigure the already amazing game visuals of Giants: Citizen Kabuto. The controls and interface will be much simpler, giving players easy access to the core fun elements of the game. Giants: Citizen Kabuto for the PlayStation 2 is scheduled for domestic shipment to retail in Q2 2001.

The story of Giants takes place on a planetary formation known as The Island, where three races find themselves at odds with one another. The Meccaryns, a team of beer-drinking cocky aliens, have technological

superiority on their side. The Sea Reapers possess devastating elemental spells and magical combat abilities. And then, there’s Kabuto ... a thundering mass of horn and sinew, Kabuto’s advantage lays in his sheer brute force. Thrown in the mix together, these three warring sides battle each other as well as the hostile environment of the Island in a grueling but often humorous struggle for supremacy and survival.

Giants: Citizen Kabuto has drawn numerous accolades for taking a new visual direction in 3D gaming. Instead of the dark, monochromatic interiors that have become the standard of action game settings, Giants offers wide-open landscapes to entice and challenge the player. The game levels occur on different island formations situated within the glittering seas of an amazing 3D world. These islands sport lush jungles or dark volcanic rock, while others consist of massive icebergs and jagged plateaus. To highlight the stunning visuals of sea and land, the skies over each island comprise vast strokes of vibrant cloud formations and a brilliant sun overhead.

All of these environments in Giants: Citizen Kabuto will amaze PlayStation 2 players with their deep, rich colors, portraying a natural world that borders on the supernatural. Viewing from a third-person perspective, the player controls each of the three main characters at different points in the storyline. Each race has access to different equipment and abilities as the game progresses. Just as your powers grow over the course of the game, so do those of your foes. Enemies will use projectile weapons, magical spells, and group tactics in their efforts to defeat you -- and with each one you defeat, new and greater challenges await you just over the next hill.

THQ Ships ‘‘Croc 2’’ for Game Boy Color

THQ Inc. announced the release of ‘‘Croc 2" for Game Boy Color.

The sequel to last year’s successful ‘‘Croc" for Game Boy Color, ‘‘Croc 2" takes the cuddly creature on an adventure in search of his long lost parents. The ‘‘Croc" franchise has sold more than 2.4 million units worldwide on the PlayStation and Game Boy Color systems. Developed by Natsume, ‘‘Croc 2" for Game Boy Color is now available at major retail outlets nationwide.

‘‘We’re excited to add another Croc adventure to our extensive, family-friendly Game Boy Color library," stated Germaine Gioia, vice president of licensing, THQ. ‘‘‘Croc 2’ for Game Boy Color allows millions of Croc fans to interact with their favorite crocodile in an all new adventure."

‘‘The ongoing success of the ’Croc’ franchise and the Game Boy Color system continues to give enthusiasts exciting new adventures with the loveable green hero," stated Dave Shaw, executive director of marketing, Fox Interactive. ‘‘Croc’s proven track record on multiple platforms demonstrates the popularity of the franchise among fans of all ages."

In ‘‘Croc 2" for Game Boy Color, players assume the role of Croc as he searches for his long lost parents. The innocent search soon becomes a dangerous mission as the evil Barton Dante attempts to interfere with Croc’s plans. Gamers earn Jump Jellys and Crystals by eliminating mischievous monsters while Croc’s Spin, Tail and all new Comet Attack can be used to save his allies, the friendly Gobbos, from the naughty Dantinis.

Gameplay incorporates both strong puzzle and story aspects that challenge players throughout 12 levels in 4 different Gobbo worlds filled with unique Gobbos, troublesome monsters and lots of surprises.

EA to Publish Digital Illusions' Battlefield 1942

WWII Game Under Development for PC and Xbox

Electronic Arts announced that it has signed an exclusive worldwide agreement with Swedish game developer Digital Illusions to publish Battlefield 1942 for both the PC and Xbox.

Battlefield 1942 is a single and multiplayer action game that brings WWII to life. The title will include a variety of playable vehicles from famous fighterplanes to tanks and battleships. The game will also include a vast array of battlefields allowing players to engage in skirmishes that take place in small towns or wage massive battles on land and sea.

''Battlefield 1942 is an exciting interactive WWII experience that will appeal to players who enjoy strategizing and fighting in some of the world's greatest battles," said Electronic Arts Distribution Vice President Tom Frisina. ''We think Digital Illusions has the skill and experience that makes them uniquely qualified to recreate the look and feel of that period in an exciting game experience."

''This agreement is an important part in our strategy for creating alliances with leading software and hardware manufacturers," said Digital Illusions' Chief Executive Officer Patrick Soderlund. ''This is the most significant contract ever signed by Digital Illusions for a single game and we are thrilled to be working with Electronic Arts."

EA Ships NBA Live 2001 For The PlayStation 2

Electronic Arts announced it is shipping NBA LIVE 2001 for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system, the first NBA title for the burgeoning video gaming platform. The seventh edition in the ultra-realistic series, EA SPORTS(TM) NBA LIVE 2001 allows gamers to command the post or operate above the rim with numerous new moves and features, all designed to take players out of the stands and onto the court.

"I am proud to be associated with a product like NBA LIVE 2001 and it's really nice to be featured on the cover, especially since it's the first NBA game for the PlayStation 2," said Minnesota Timberwolves star forward Kevin Garnett. "I've been playing this game since the beginning and I believe that 2001's off the hook gameplay combined with the PlayStation 2 graphics make NBA LIVE 2001 for the PlayStation 2 the best basketball video game ever."

NBA LIVE 2001 features new post play that afford players the option of posting up and taking the ball strong to the hole with four strong new moves or kicking it out to a wing player for an open three. This all new inside game, with new animations and motion capture done by Kevin Garnett, gives players an authentic feeling of contact and battling for post position the likes never before available in console gaming. New post moves include spins, hook shots, fade away jumpers and the nearly

impossible to defend "up and under" move, all giving you the chance show your mettle in the in the paint, banging around with the big boys.

"From the incredibly responsive gameplay to the life-like graphics, we believe that NBA LIVE 2001 for the PlayStation 2 is the most complete console basketball experience to date," said executive producer Stan Chow. "Every feature we put into this game, from post moves to life-like player models, are there because we felt like it would bring users one step closer to being on the court. In making LIVE 2001 we wanted to push the capabilities of the PlayStation 2, as well as deliver what users have come to expect over the years from the LIVE series. We believe we were successful in translating our ideas into a fun and realistic basketball experience."

NBA LIVE 2001 PlayStation 2 Features:

New Transitions enhance in-game sequences and add to the on-court drama. There is never a dull moment as the gamer drops right into player introductions to experience the pregame emotion, followed by the handshakes at half-court to wish their opponent well before the opening tip. In addition, see player’s personalities and emotions come out on the court as they talk with each other, encourage teammates, debate calls with the referees and celebrate huge plays. Improved speech and sound effects capture the essence of the interaction between the play-by-play and color commentators. Bob Elliott adds new in-depth play analysis and all new color commentary for more intelligent and relevant interaction with the game play-by-play done once again by NBA and NBA LIVE veteran Don Poier. New high-flying motion-captured dunks and post moves performed by NBA All-Star and Olympic gold medallist Kevin Garnett. A cutting-edge soundtrack with the widest array of hip-hop and rap songs ever available in the LIVE series, including Universal recording artist Montell Jordan who wrote and performed the games title track, "Unstoppable." More than 50 of the greatest NBA legends. Gamers can compete against five All-Star teams from the 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, 80’s and 90’s to find out exactly how well today’s young superstars match-up against the stars of yesteryear. Users can also play one-on-one on an outdoor court using current NBA players or legendary players. The classic match-ups are endless. Create-a-Player allows gamers the ability to create custom players with individual features including player attributes, skill ratings and appearance.

NBA LIVE 2001 is rated "E" (Everyone) by the ESRB. NBA LIVE 2001 is analog controller compatible and supports up to eight players.

Sega Turns Typing Into Terror With Typing of the Dead

Sega Introduces Genre-Defying Game That Melds Fast-Paced Survival Action With Typing Tutorial-Styled Gameplay

Trade in your videogame controller for a keyboard and start typing to save your life! Sega of America announced the release of ‘‘Typing of the Dead" for the 128-bit, Internet ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console. Similar to the arcade hit ‘‘The House of the Dead 2," this game incorporates zombie-ventilating action, but instead of using a lightgun peripheral or a controller, players rely on a Dreamcast keyboard for survival. Speed, accuracy and quick reflexes are the keys to success.

‘‘Typing of the Dead" includes all of the great arcade features of ‘‘House of the Dead 2," plus exclusive Dreamcast stages to turn typing into boss-fighting, hostage-saving, multi-player action!

Equipped with a keyboard and their typing skills, gamers are challenged to ’type’ zombies to death by completing words and phrases that appear over their undead assailants’ bodies. With quirky word themes, complex words and increasing time restraints, only players who type fast and accurately will survive!

‘‘With the release of ’Typing of the Dead,’ Sega continues to surprise the industry with original game design by defying traditional categories," said Gwen Marker, marketing communications manager, Sega of America. ‘‘This title has successfully combined a typing tutorial with exciting and chilling gameplay -- a game concept that has never been attempted until now."

Among the enhancements to this arcade hit are the Boss, Drill and Original modes. Boss and Drill modes are both designed to emphasize different skill sets, while the Original mode introduces new objectives involving collecting coins and fulfilling special conditions.

‘‘Typing of the Dead" is both a thrilling two-player game and a competitive typing tutorial, incorporating the best of both learning and gaming. Gamers battle zombies together and then compare scores at the end of each level. As a result, they will need to master everything from finger placement to speed typing to come out ahead.

‘‘Typing of the Dead" is rated ‘‘M" for Mature and is available for $29.95 at retailers nationwide and at www.sega.com.

Sony Scores Two Game Developers

Sony moved further into the video-game software business Monday with the purchase of game developers Red Zone Interactive and Naughty Dog.

Among major video-game hardware manufacturers, Sony has been the most reliant on third-party developers for its PlayStation and PlayStation 2 game consoles. Sony has released just a handful of games under its own name. And only one of the titles--puzzle game "Fantavision"--available when the PlayStation 2 launched last year came from Sony.

Competition is heating up, however. Microsoft is expected to offer a strong lineup of in-house and third-party titles for the launch of its Xbox game console later this year.

Red Zone, based in San Diego, is best known for sports titles such as "NFL Game Day" and "NBA Shoot Out." The company has 65 employees.

Naughty Dog helped established the PlayStation with its "Crash Bandicoot" racing games. The Santa Monica, Calif.-based company has 30 employees. However, Sony is unlikely to win exclusive rights to "Crash Bandicoot" because the game’s publisher, Japan’s Konami, has already committed to sell one game for the Xbox. Both Naughty Dog and Red Zone will become subsidiaries of Sony Computer Entertainment, the Sony arm responsible for

PlayStation. They will report to Shuhei Yoshida, vice president for product development. Financial terms of the deals were not disclosed.

"Throughout the course of the year, we have expanded our internal development efforts considerably," Yoshida said in statement.

Besides being plagued by persistent hardware shortages, the PlayStation 2 was criticized when it launched a middling selection of software titles that failed to take full advantage of the console’s capabilities.

Senators Critique Video Game Makers

Senators and a media watchdog group scolded video game makers Thursday for continuing to market violent games to children, but credited the industry for getting nearly all its manufacturers to use a voluntary rating system.

After showing clips of video games in which players score by shooting, goring and dismembering lifelike computer-generated characters, Sens. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn.; Herb Kohl, D-Wis.; and Sam Brownback, R-Kan., said they will introduce a bill next month that would punish companies that market such games to youngsters.

‘‘Practically everybody in the industry still markets inappropriate games to kids, practically every retailer regularly sells these games to kids, and practically all parents need to know more about the rating system," Kohl said at a news conference.

At the same time, he said, ‘‘Nearly ever game is rated, and the industry’s voluntary rating system was recently hailed by the Federal Trade Commission as the best and most informative rating system in the entertainment industry."

David Walsh, president of the National Institute on Media and the Family, credited the video game industry both for rating games and for creating a review board to enforce voluntary industry guidelines on advertising. The industry began using voluntary ratings in 1994.

But Walsh’s group, which released its fifth annual report card on video and computer games on Thursday, gave retailers a near-failing grade for allowing children younger than 17 to buy video games rated for older players.

The report says FuncoLand and Target were the only two retail chains that consistently enforced policies prohibiting the sales of adult video games to children. Other stores made the same pledge but didn’t enforce it, the report said.

‘‘The industry has to follow through on its promise to stop marketing games with age-sensitive content to kids and educate the public about which games are and are not safe for young people," Walsh said.

‘‘Retailers have to begin taking steps to prevent inappropriate games from making it into the hands of young players."

Hal Halpin, president of the Interactive Entertainment Merchants Association, said retailers share the same goals as the senators and can meet them without legislation.

‘‘We’re all in the same ballpark," Halpin said. ‘‘It’s just a matter of taking the time to educate and train the people working in the stores and selling the video games."

The report card and the senators’ call for legislation comes three months after a Federal Trade Commission report said the video game, music and movie industries target excessively market sexually explicit products to children.

‘‘The FTC said they don’t have the authority to take action against that," Lieberman said. ‘‘Our legislation will be narrowly focused to let them."

Doug Lowenstein, president of the Interactive Digital Software Association representing video game makers, said he believes the legislation will hamper the industry’s desire to regulate itself and could violate the First Amendment.

‘‘The bottom line is that we agree that companies need to be very cautious in how they market products intended for mature audiences. And through our own efforts, we’ve made significant efforts to meet that obligation," he said.

Lowenstein said only 7 percent of the 218 million video games sold in 2000 were rated ‘‘M," for mature audiences. Of the 20 best-selling video games last year, only one - ‘‘Diablo 2" - had an M rating. Three were rated for teens, and the rest were deemed suitable for all players.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Studies Find Increase In Online Advertising

Online advertising continues to grow despite negative perceptions regarding its effectiveness, according to two reports released Monday.

AdRelevance, a division of Jupiter Media Metrix, found that online ad impressions--or the number of times an ad appears online--increased last month by 21 percent from November 2000, revealing an all-time high of more than 65 billion impressions.

In another report released Monday, Forrester Research forecast that online marketing per company would rise from $550,000 this year to $1 million in 2003. It expects a new wave of online ad spending to power a recovery in 2003 that could propel U.S. digital marketing, not just impression-based advertising, to $63 billion in 2005.

"There’s no mystery about the fact that there’s a lot of negativity about online advertising," said Charles Buchwalter, vice president of media research at AdRelevance. But "many advertisers are continuing to refine

their strategies and continue to grow in online advertising."

The reports contradict widespread perceptions that the market for online advertising is weakening--a factor in Net bellwether Yahoo’s recent downward revision for its outlook in 2001.

In its report, AdRelevance ranked the top five Web sites by ad impressions and by estimated revenues in December.

Buchwalter said the actual revenues recorded by the companies may differ substantially from the report, which did not include possible discounts negotiated by advertisers from the published rates. He added that comparisons with 1999 numbers are not possible because this year’s report included several types of online advertising rather than just banner ads.

Leading the pack was Yahoo with 7.62 million ad impressions, followed by Microsoft’s MSN site with 6.34 million impressions. iWon had 2.56 million impressions; AOL Time Warner’s AOL.com site 2.2 million; and eBay 1.58 million. In estimated revenues, MSN came first with $180 million in ad sales, based on its published rate card. Yahoo placed second with $118 million, followed by AOL Time Warner’s Netscape Communications with $56 million.

The report did not include numbers for AOL Time Warner’s proprietary America Online service.

Buchwalter said MSN charges more than Yahoo on its rate card and had lined up some big ad contracts with individual companies. For example, Amazon.com, the largest Web advertiser in December, spent 40 percent of its total $61.8 million online ad budget at MSN.

Other big advertising spenders last month were Barnes&Noble.com at $23.8 million, Classmates.com at $19.3 million, First USA at $11.2 million, and eBay at $11.1 million.

Forrester’s report said companies are expected to greatly expand their online advertising budgets in the coming months.

"Banner bashing and low click-through rates won’t deter advertisers from doubling online spending by 2003," the report said. "They don’t foresee major changes in online marketing strategy but do admit that they have a lot to learn before shifting spending from their offline media."

Congress Takes on Internet Privacy Legislation

Two U.S. lawmakers unveiled legislation on Tuesday providing some privacy protection for Internet users, adding yet another approach to what will likely be a major issue for the 107th Congress.

The bill, co-sponsored by Reps. Chris Cannon, a Utah Republican, and Anna Eshoo, a California Democrat, would require Web sites to notify visitors how personal data such as telephone numbers and ZIP codes are used, and allow visitors to limit its use.

‘‘Consumers shouldn’t have to reveal their life story every time they surf the Web," Eshoo said in a press release.

The bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on Saturday. It mirrors legislation introduced in the Senate last year by Arizona Republican John McCain and Massachusetts Democrat John Kerry.

Separate bills have already been introduced in the House by New Jersey congressmen Rodney Frelinghuysen, a Republican, and Rush Holt, a Democrat. Many commercial Web sites regard information collected from customers and visitors as a source of revenue. When retailer Toysmart.com sought to sell its customer database as part of bankruptcy proceedings last summer, it quickly attracted the ire of consumer groups and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission. The sale was eventually blocked by the FTC.

Observers and legislators agree that Congress will probably pass an Internet privacy bill this year. The question is what sort of bill will emerge: one that sets minimal guidelines and encourages industry to police itself, or one that provides stronger federal protections for consumers?

The Cannon-Eshoo bill falls into the former category. Like last year’s McCain-Kerry bill, it would require Web sites to clearly state what they intend to do with the personal data they collect from visitors, but would place no restrictions on what they do with that data.

Web sites would be required to allow visitors to opt out of any data collection attempts.

The bill closely reflects the views of Internet companies who say such data allows them to target products, services and advertising to individual customers.

Consumer advocates say Web sites should not use visitors’ data unless they are given explicit permission, or what is known as an ‘‘opt-in" model.

Andrew Shen, a policy analyst at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, said consumers should be able to find out what data is collected about them and with whom it is shared. Consumers should also be able to sue Web sites that violate their privacy, instead of relying on the FTC to handle their complaints. Neither provision is included in the Cannon-Eshoo bill.

While some Internet trade groups oppose new privacy laws, others have recognized that a government role is inevitable. The American Electronics Association released a set of guidelines last week calling for legislation similar to that introduced by Cannon and Eshoo.

Cannon spokesman Jeff Hartley said the McCain-Kerry bill was drafted with input from high-tech companies Hewlett-Packard Co. and Intel Corp.

Hartley said the bill will serve as a starting point for discussion, and that any legislation that reached the House floor will likely look substantially different.

‘‘We don’t see the legislation we have as the ending point -- we want all interested parties to weigh in on this," Hartley said.

The bill will be taken up by the two House committees on which the co-sponsors sit, Hartley said. Cannon will oversee its progress through the Judiciary committee, while Eshoo will keep track of it in the Commerce committee, he said.

Juno Set To Stream Software At High Speeds

Juno Online Services on Tuesday said it will offer its high-speed Internet subscribers streamed software applications through a deal with Into Networks.

Interest in software subscription services is on the uptick. With the Into Networks deal, Juno is seeking to balance its free, ad-supported dial-up business with more paying broadband customers. The Internet service provider is the latest company to enter the streaming software market, after Excite@Home's announcement in November that it would offer a broadband software application service, also with software streaming provider Into Networks.

"It a very good move" for Juno, said Jupiter Media Metrix analyst Joe Laszlo. "If you're trying to attract customers to a broadband service, its important to offer them more than just high-speed connections or always on-connections. There should be some applications, some things you can only do with a broadband connection in addition to just the benefits of the access itself."

Streaming software enables PC users to access files stored remotely on a server without downloading a copy onto a hard drive. Streaming is commonly used to broadcast media content, including music and video files that are accessed using a media player such as RealNetworks' RealPlayer.

With the Into Networks application, customers would also use the company's Into Player. Instead of streaming media, however, Into users can stream software onto their desktops, getting access to an application without installing it on their computers.

Under the deal, Into Networks will provide Juno Express broadband subscribers with fee-based, on-demand access to software, including education, games and business titles such as Lotus Organizer, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Monopoly, and the "Complete Idiot's Guide to Marketing Materials."

Juno Express subscribers will be able to test software in free trials, rent individual titles for a few days, or subscribe to channels fed by more than 30 software publishers. Into Networks said single-day rentals would cost about $2.99, and a full subscription would cost less than $15.

"What gets people excited about broadband are the unique content, services and features that only high-speed connections can provide," Juno Chief Executive Charles Ardai said in a statement.

Some analysts, however, said the market for software streaming subscriptions is still unproven. Richard Doherty, director of research for Seaford, N.Y.-based The Envisioneering Group, said that consumer adaptability will be a factor in whether streaming software is ready for the masses.

"The technology is there, and Juno is now prepared to be at the forefront of the volumes of streaming software applications that are delivered," he said. But "the business model is still a little fuzzy."

Thanks For The Memory: 30GB Hard Drive On A Platter

Western Digital becomes first drive maker to create a 30GB hard drive on a single platter. Will lower prices follow?

Western Digital has introduced the industry's first hard drive that offers 30GB of capacity on a single platter, which translates into two words that consumers love to hear: bigger and cheaper.

A hard drive's main--and incidentally most expensive--components are the platters, or disks, where information is stored, and the heads, which read the data from the platters.

Western Digital's new WD Caviar 5400 RPM, announced Monday, will come in three capacities: 30GB, 40GB and 60GB. The 30GB version will come with one platter and two heads; the 40GB will come with two platters and three heads; and the 60GB will come with two platters and four heads.

Until now, the most capacity on any platter was 20GB.

Irvine, Calif.-based Western Digital, one of the top five hard-drive makers, said the 30GB version will sell at retail for $119 and the 60GB version will cost $249.

"By putting more capacity on a single platter, a manufacturer uses fewer parts, which means a lower cost," said Jim Porter, president of Disk/Trend, a market researcher that follows the data storage industry.

Cost savings may not appear obvious at first to consumers because about 75 percent of hard drives are sold to PC manufacturers. In that instance, savings will eventually come through on a computer's price tag. The remaining 25 percent of hard drives are sold directly to consumers who already own PCs and want to upgrade their systems.

Only about 5 percent of the market will want this maximum capacity initially, Porter said, but the Caviar 5400 RPM will still help drive down the cost of other, lower-capacity hard drives.

This is good news for consumers looking for new ways to store photos, music and new applications. That's because files created by digital cameras and MP3 players can eat up to a couple of megabytes of storage depending on the quality that the file is recorded in. This means hard drives fill up quickly unless capacity is increased.

"Each photo or music file takes up about a meg, and people generally don't throw them away, so their drives are filling up fast," Porter said.

Despite the initial hoopla, however, Western Digital's 30GB platter could end up being what Porter called a "half step" in the hard-drive business. Capacities have increased 100 percent each year for the last couple of years, and the most recent increase for the industry was last year to 20GB. Porter expects 40GB platters from Western Digital's competitors, such as Seagate Technology, Maxtor and Quantum, this spring.

The question now is whether competitors will suddenly decide to produce hard drives with 30GB platters and diffuse Western Digital's current competitive advantage or will wait a few months and trump Western Digital with 40GB platters.

"Western Digital is basically in a comeback mode after falling behind its competitors," Porter said. "All its competitors know that they will be at 40GB later in the year."

Sound Blaster For Mac Almost Ready

Creative Labs is poised to ship the first Mac product in its popular Sound Blaster line "soon, very soon," a company representative told MacWEEK. Creative is finishing work on Sound Blaster Live! for Macintosh and preparing a large software bundle that he said will demonstrate all of the capabilities of the audio card on the Mac.

Creative announced plans to port the card to the Macintosh at Macworld Expo in January 1999. Since then, Creative has offered Macworld demonstrations of its Nomad II MG and Nomad Jukebox products, but Sound Blaster has still not shipped.

The company makes a wide range of PC audio boards, from bare-bones models in economy PCs to the Sound Blaster Platinum -- a full-featured board for hardcore gamers and audiophiles. Creative's Kurt Heiden said that Sound Blaster Live! for Macintosh will combine features from all of Creative's PC sound boards. It will be closest to the Platinum model, he said -- featuring a MIDI port, Mic in, Line in, digital out, speakers/headphones out and rear speakers out -- but without the Platinum's external controls faceplate. It will support two- and four-channel audio and promises to improve performance in games and other audio-intensive applications by offloading many audio effects, including 3-D effects, from the CPU.

"There is a stronger music market on the Mac, and we want to be responsible and support all of our music features" for Mac users, Heiden said. However, he added that there are technical challenges in getting the board to work with the Mac. For example, the software must account for both the Mac OS Sound Manager and the OMS (Open Music System) standard, which many third-party applications treat differently.

Creative's card will introduce Mac users to four-channel audio and EAX (Environmental Effects) technology. Four-channel audio provides surround-sound in games, movies and applications, and games such as Deus Ex and Unreal Tournament already support four-channel audio on the Mac.

However, the Mac cannot take advantage of the feature because the Mac OS is limited to supporting two-channel audio. When the Sound Blaster card ships, games will be able to use four-channel audio on the Mac, but because DVD movies rely on the Mac OS Sound Manager, Creative won't be able to support surround-sound in DVD movies. Heiden said that Mac OS X will support multi-channel audio, but Creative is waiting for finalized Mac OS X Software Development Kits before announcing OS X compatibility.

EAX technology allows developers to simulate the effects that different environments have on audio, so you can make a weapon sound like it's blasting in a carpeted room or an open cavern. Blizzard is considering an EAX patch for Diablo II that would provide for more-realistic audio effects in caves, wilderness and cathedrals.

Creative is also promoting a complementary audio standard called OpenAL that allows developers to control the movement of sound in a 3D space.

Loki Software is also backing OpenAL, but MacSoft, Mac Play and Aspyr have all expressed interest, Creative said.

During Steve Jobs' Macworld Expo keynote, he showcased Creative's Nomad 2 MP3 player as he presented the new iTunes software. Later that day, Heiden said, Jobs visited the Creative booth and told Heiden that the Nomad Jukebox would be much "cooler" with a FireWire port to speed music downloads. The Apple CEO left with a Jukebox to play with, Heiden said.

The board's minimum requirements are Mac OS 8.6, a Power Mac 7200 or later and 64MB of RAM, but the preferred configuration is a Power Mac G3 or later with 128MB of RAM running Mac OS 9. It was available for pre-order at Macworld Expo for $99, but Creative has not announced final retail pricing.

Sellers Irate Over Auction Fee Hikes

Upset auction sellers are threatening to take their business elsewhere after the recent one-two punch of Yahoo Auctions charging fees and eBay raising their fees.

And while eBay may be able to shake off any long-term impact, Yahoo's move was considered much more dramatic by industry watchers. Yahoo had been essentially the last large free auction site on the Web before they decided to start charging listing fees.

"Will eBay lose in the long run? To a certain degree, but not enough to affect them and not enough so that they care," said Rosalinda Baldwin, who tracks online auctions as editor of The Auction Guild, an online newsletter.

But Yahoo's move was "suicidal," she said, pointing to a sharp drop off in listings on Yahoo Auctions.

AuctionWatch.com Chief Operating Officer Dan Neary said the number of auctions listed on Yahoo through his company's listing services has dropped more than 50 percent since the fee increase went into effect earlier this month. In contrast, AuctionWatch has not seen a significant change in the number of listings on eBay to date.

Yahoo spokeswoman Nancy Gallinghouse said the reaction to its listing fees were "in line with our expectations. No surprises."

Yahoo started charging the listing fees earlier this month amid concern about a downturn in online advertising revenues. The portal giant later announced that while its fourth-quarter earnings met Wall Street expectations, it expected that its 2001 earnings would come in below analysts' projections.

The following week, eBay announced that it was raising its fees, in some cases by up to 65 percent. Unlike Yahoo, eBay not only beat analysts fourth-quarter expectations, it raised its projections for 2001 earnings.

eBay's new fees will take effect on Jan. 31. Sellers began paying the new listing fees at Yahoo on Jan. 10.

Some eBay sellers have threatened to boycott the online auction site to protest the new fees and have even put together a Web site to promote the boycott. eBay members have threatened boycotts in the past, but they have never had a noticeable, long-term affect on the site.

Instead of boycotting, some eBay members say they will stop using services, such as featured listings and photo promotions, that they have to pay extra for. But in the end, most sellers will probably stick with eBay, said The Auction Guild's Baldwin.

eBay spokesman Kevin Pursglove said that the immediate reaction on the company's message boards to its listing fees was unfavorable, but that sentiment seems to have died down, he said. The company is aware of the boycott movement, but isn't particularly concerned about it, he said.

"We don't want our users to take their listings anywhere else, but we think in the long run users will recognize the value of the eBay marketplace," he said.

For online auction seller Richard Fulton, the new fees mean it's back to the future.

Last year, Fulton stopped selling his Civil War memorabilia and collectibles on eBay after being a seller there for about two years. Upset over recurring outages and other issues, the Perkasie, Penn., resident shifted most of his inventory over to Yahoo Auctions.

But now Yahoo's new fees have him shifting back to eBay. He says he plans to stick it out, despite eBay's own fee hike.

"We're all running back to eBay right now, eating McCrow sandwiches and loving it," Fulton said. "I think everyone is so ticked at Yahoo, they're not noticing what they're paying at eBay."

The message boards at AuctionWatch and other sites suggest Fulton is not alone.

Nancy, a seller from Sumner, Wash., who declined to give her last name, said that she will no longer list on Yahoo. Instead, she said that she is exploring some of the smaller auction sites and, if necessary, will return to eBay, where she sold previously.

"Yahoo was adequate and I would have stayed until they stabbed the sellers in the back when they announced the fees and refused to listen to sellers' concerns," Nancy said in an e-mail to CNET News.com. "I will not be paying the fees on Yahoo. The traffic does not warrant it."

"They're resentful, they're angry, they're not happy about it," she said. But she added, "Overall, I think people will just grit their teeth and go with it."

Some smaller sites have seen a boom in traffic and listings in the wake of the fee announcements. eBay and Yahoo sellers say they have begun to list their items on free sites such as Pootah.com, AuxPal.com and BidBay.

DutchBid.com President Eric Rosenberg said traffic on his online auction site is 20 percent higher now than before Yahoo decided to charge listing fees. Meanwhile, James Kim, chief executive of ePier, said the number of page views on his site has gone up 5 times since Yahoo's announcement.

"We’re getting a lot of new users, that’s for sure," Rosenberg said. "Folks have been looking for a new home. This opens their eyes to other options."

But the increased attention has not been without cost. Plagued by service problems, Pootah is in the process of moving their auctions to a new server. ePier’s Kim said that his company will have to add additional servers to handle the surge in traffic.

The new traffic and listings haven’t necessarily led to an upswing in bidders or sales. Many of the listings on the smaller auctions sites have no bids at all.

Fulton said after leaving Yahoo, he moved his collectible coins on to Pootah. Although most of his auctions have closed without bids, he plans to keep them on Pootah for a while because the site’s management has been responsive to his requests for new categories and tools.

"I’ll probably keep some stuff there just to support their efforts," he said.

Spam Filters May Feed Web Marketing

Some popular free Web services are playing both sides of the fence when it comes to protecting consumers from pesky marketers, offering to block junk e-mail while they help advertisers push promotions into customers’ in-boxes.

The practice underscores a delicate balancing act for e-mail services, some of which tout features for filtering unwanted messages while they cozy up to advertisers with "opt in" e-mail programs--for a fee.

Those deals fall short of supporting the most reviled form of online marketing messages: unrequested bulk e-mail known as spam. But anti-spam advocates say Web services that offer opt-in mailing lists are walking into a marketing gray area--one that could grow increasingly murky as the practice becomes more popular.

In this battle, analysts predict that spam filters, ostensibly aimed at protecting consumers from junk e-mail, will increasingly play a role in turning promotions into profits for Web e-mail providers.

"The hypocrisy is that these companies want to stop junk e-mail from other parties but at the same time want to exploit their own customers to the greatest extent possible," said anti-spam advocate Jason Catlett, of Junkbusters. "Consumers need to realize that there is no such thing as a free lunch."

CNET Networks, the publisher of News.com, offers numerous opt-in newsletter services.

Opt-in programs have been in place for some time, and analysts predict they will become more pervasive in the coming months as free Web services search for new revenue streams.

In a study released Wednesday, New York-based Jupiter Research, a division of Jupiter Media Metrix, predicted that Web e-mail providers and Internet

service providers will increasingly use their power to weed out unwanted messages from consumer e-mail in-boxes as a way to squeeze profits out of direct e-mail marketers.

Since Web e-mail services already restrict access to a member's primary in-box, advertisers looking to reach consumers online will be forced to pay a premium to avoid getting dumped in the trash, according to Jupiter analyst Christopher Todd.

"Consumers are going to complain about the increased spam, so that's why we'll see a shift from the primary in-box to the bulk e-mail box," he said.

Online portal Yahoo, for example, gives e-mail subscribers the opportunity to filter bulk e-mail, directing certain messages to a junk e-mail folder rather than to the main in-box. Jupiter projects that such services will get modified so members can select topics they wish to hear about, allowing related bulk messages into their primary in-boxes.

The hitch is that marketers will have to pay to be on the select list. Advertisers could shell out an even higher premium to reach consumers based on the time they read their e-mail, according to Jupiter.

Yahoo said it is has been taking advantage of its relationship with marketers and e-mail subscribers for two years, since shortly after its acquisition of permission-based marketing company Yoyodyne. "We've recognized the value of online direct marketing for quite a while," said Nicki Dugan, a Yahoo spokeswoman.

Since some people may request marketing notices that appeal to their interests, the company sees no problem with the practice.

The online portal asks consumers when they sign up for an e-mail account if they would like to receive promotions based on their preferences. If the consumer opts in, it will charge marketers to reach these consumers via e-mail.

Microsoft's Hotmail also offers a primitive form of this type of paid marketing through its Web courier e-mail service. Newsletter publishers pay to be on a list that consumers can choose from to receive content via e-mail. The publisher then sells advertising on the e-mail newsletters to recoup losses on delivery.

Junkbusters' Catlett said opt-in programs that gain genuine permission from consumers to send material are kosher and raise no concerns of double-dealing. But he cautioned that not all opt-in programs are alike, with some aimed at duping consumers into accepting marketing material from random, third-party sources, rather than from highly targeted businesses.

"There is a gray area where companies pretend to have a commission from the consumer but where the consumer...is really not aware of what they're signing up for," he said. "I call it 'creeping commission.' It's very common."

Because promotional e-mail has proliferated on the Web, the opportunity to turn e-mail addresses into profits may be too tempting to pass up, analysts said. The number of marketing e-mail messages sent through Internet service providers and e-mail services will be about 5.6 billion for every 1 million subscribers by 2005, Jupiter found.

"Internet e-mail service providers control a crucial chokepoint between

marketers and the millions of consumers they want to reach," Jupiter’s Todd said.

A Year After Super-Bowl Touchdown, Dot-Com Ads Punt

A year after commercials by Internet companies dominated the airwaves at America’s most-watched sporting event, the dot-coms have been punted out of the Super Bowl.

Only three dot-coms will advertise in the U.S. football championship on Jan. 28, a far cry from last year’s game when 17 dot-coms took part in the premiere advertising event of the year in the United States. At the height of the dot-com craze last year, now defunct Internet companies like Pets.com used the Super Bowl as a launching pad for their products and services.

But this year only Web broker E-Trade, recruitment sites HotJobs.com Ltd. and Monster.com, a unit of TMP Worldwide TMPW.O, are back in the big game as the average $2.3 million price tag for a 30-second spot is way out of reach for cash-strapped Internet companies.

More traditional Super Bowl advertisers, such as MasterCard, are making their way back to reach the estimated 130 million U.S. viewers expected to watch the New York Giants and Baltimore Ravens battle for the National Football League championship.

The game, being broadcast this year by Viacom Inc.’s CBS television network, is typically among the top-rated events of the year.

‘‘The downturn in technology and the dot-coms in general has caused these Web sites to retrench and reconsider their ad investments," said Bob Flood, director of national electronic media at Optimedia, which buys advertising space for advertisers on television and other media.

The dot-com domination of the year 2000 was an aberration in the history of Super Bowl advertising, traditionally the territory of consumer good giants like PepsiCo Inc. and Budweiser brewer Anheuser-Busch Cos Inc., advertising experts said.

‘‘Last year’s Super Bowl was considered amateur hour," said Bob Kuperman, president and chief executive for the Americas for advertising agency TBWA Worldwide, the unit of ad holding company Omnicom Group that created Levi’s Strauss’ ads for this year’s game.

‘‘It was all these crazy dot-coms that were doing silly things," he said. ‘‘Some of them you could look at and not know what the company was about." Advertising experts said too many of last year’s dot-com advertisers did not grasp the concept that while the Super Bowl is the final game in a championship drive for a football team, the commercials aired on the game are merely the kick-off for new creative advertising campaigns. There must be follow-through if an advertiser wants to score a touchdown with the public.

‘‘If you are looking at the Super Bowl as a one-shot deal, then you are not really using it in the right way," Kuperman said. ‘‘If you go dark or disappear after that, you are not going to imprint your brand name on

peoples’ minds." Mark DiMassimo, president and executive creative director of DiMassimo Brand Advertising said, ‘‘They were saying ’just by the fact we can afford an ad on the Super Bowl that puts us on the map’. ‘‘

But there is a sense that the dot-coms that are advertising in this year’s game are taking a more mature approach to Super Bowl advertising and that they may be in it for the long term.

‘‘E-trade was successful in signing up significant numbers of new accounts" after its Super Bowl ads," Optimedia’s Flood said. "For Hotjobs and Monster, it’s the new year when people reassess where they are in their careers." ‘‘Our traffic seems to hit record highs after the Super Bowl," said Jeff Taylor, chief executive of Monster.com, a profitable dot-com advertising on its third Super Bowl. He said his site usually gets more traffic at the beginning of the new year and the Super Bowl gives it an extra push. ‘‘It really sets the tone for the year," he said.

His company will pay less than $4 million for four 30-second spots, two during the pregame show and two during the actual game. This year’s ads, created by Arhold Worldwide in Boston, will aim to show how people can live better with a better job and have ‘‘a little irony and a little more humor than in past years, Taylor said.

Hotjobs.com, on the other hand, is sticking with the theme of "optimism and individuality" in its ads for its third Super Bowl ad campaign, Chief Executive Richard Johnson said.

The company is paying $2.4 million for a 30-second spot during the third quarter of the game, in which a ball from a desk-top toy escapes the corporate grind with the Mamas & Papas song ‘‘Go Where You Wanna Go" playing as the soundtrack and runs away and joins a game of marbles.

‘‘The whole idea is following destiny," Johnson said.

Virus Patches Aren’t Being Applied

What good is a Band-Aid if you don’t use it? Although software makers routinely release "fixes" designed to plug secutiry holes, the antidotes are often ignored

Connecting a computer to the Internet can be dangerous business. Just ask Troy Hall.

Three months ago, the experienced system administrator put his newest Linux server online. Three days later, an intruder had taken control of it.

"My first reaction was, ’How did he find me so fast?’" said Hall, who manages the servers and computers for his family-run e-business.

Exploiting a flaw in Washington University’s FTP server, the intruder had cracked the server’s security and set up shop. Hall’s system--in this case, Red Hat 6.2--shipped with the software that contained the hole. While a patch for the vulnerability was readily available on Red Hat’s Web site, like many other system administrators, Hall just didn’t get around

to installing it.

The scenario, repeated daily at sites across the Internet, exposes a common security problem largely unknown to the general public. Although software makers routinely release "fixes" designed to plug holes and reassure worried customers, these antidotes are often ignored by administrators in charge of the affected systems--if they are aware of the problem at all.

As a result, this easily avoidable problem has reached near-epidemic proportions. Making matters more frustrating is knowing that so many losses could have been easily avoided with a few mundane but crucial steps.

"I would put patching in the top two things an admin can do to secure their computers," said Lance Spitzner, coordinator for the security group Honeynet Project. The others are turning off unnecessary services, like serving up Web pages, allowing file transfers, or responding to remote logins.

Without patching, computers connected to the Internet don’t have a chance, Spitzner said. Data from the Honeynet Project suggest that almost 80 percent of all un-patched servers wouldn’t last more than three weeks before being compromised by Internet attackers.

Every day, the underground elements of the Internet use scanners to find servers susceptible to what security experts have taken to calling the "exploit du jour." Depending on the type of flaw and connection speed, anywhere from tens of thousands to millions of Internet addresses can be scanned in a single day. If even less than 1 percent of the scanned servers connected to each address are vulnerable, that can still result in thousands of defenseless possibilities for a hacker.

Failing to responsibly patch computers led to 99 percent of the 5,823 Web site defacements last year, up 56 percent from the 3,746 Web sites defaced in 1999, according to security group Attrition.org.

The price of neglect can be especially costly for large corporations. Fortune 1,000 companies lost more than $45 billion from the theft of proprietary information in 1999, according to a study released by the American Society for Industrial Security and consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. The majority of those hacking incidents hit tech companies, with nearly 67 individual attacks and the average theft ringing up about $15 million in losses.

Security experts emphasize the need for simple maintenance rather than new technology to address security issues.

"It is more cost effective to maintain your systems and apply patches than spending that money," said William Fithen, senior member of the technical staff at the Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Center at Carnegie Mellon University. "If you are not making the investment in keeping your machines up-to-date, you are wasting your money."

This week, for example, the Ramen Linux worm spread widely, exploiting the same vulnerability--among others--that befell Hall, as he made the mistake of configuring his embryonic Web server while it was connected to the Internet.

Originally discovered in June 2000, the wu-FTP vulnerability still remains

a common way for the lowest form of Internet attacker, the "script kiddie," to gain entry to servers. Three months after its discovery, the popularity of the flaw caused a jump in defacements of Web sites based on servers using the Linux operating system.

And that’s only a single flaw.

Lack of training can be blamed in many preventable cases, said Chris Klaus, the chief technology officer with security firm Internet Security Systems.

"To some extent, a lot of it is ignorance," he said. "When we walk into most companies, they aren’t even aware they should be patching anything."

Another reason is simple math: A company with 1,000 computers may have, say, four administrators. If each machine needs to be patched once a month, that’s still ten or so machines that need to be maintained by each administrator every day. That’s in addition to all the other problems that crop up.

"Part of the problem is that you get so tied up in the day-to-day work, and there are so many different (software) packages, that is can be a full-time job just to keep up with all the patches," lamented Hall.

Several initiatives hope to change that.

As part of the National Plan for Critical Infrastructure Defense, the Clinton administration proposed a Scholarship for Service plan that will start next year. In exchange for up to $24,000 in tuition fees over two years to help train them in computer security, students have to serve the same amount of time securing government servers after graduation.

Industry associations are also trying to raise awareness. The System Administration, Networking and Security Institute (SANS) last summer released its top 10 list of security holes that need to be plugged.

Although those initiatives are aimed at educating system administrators, it’s an uphill battle. Newly trained administrators continue to enter the industry, requiring that the software companies repeatedly start from zero.

The Remote Data Services flaw in Microsoft’s Internet Information Server may be the best example of how repeated education can fail. In June 1998, the RDS flaw became public. By July 1998, Microsoft had created a patch. Despite its release, the RDS flaw remained a favorite way for script kiddies to cut their teeth. In an attempt to reduce the number of vulnerable servers on the Internet, Microsoft re-released the RDS advisory in July 1999 and again in July 2000. Still, defacements of Web sites based on Microsoft’s Internet Information Server remain much higher, as a percentage, than attacks on Linux.

Microsoft’s poor showing stems largely from the company’s success. While sites running on the Apache Web server outnumber those running on Microsoft’s IIS about 3-to-1, sites running Microsoft software are appealing targets for hackers. A successful attack generally draws more attention, giving greater notoriety for publicity seekers.

Another way that software makers have attempted to boost security across the Internet has been to create automated updating programs to make patching a no-brainer. Most operating system makers have already added

some form of automated updates to their products.

Even so, system administrators frequently fail to use the utilities. For some, it’s a matter of time. For others, the complexity of the their networks leads to information overload.

Automated updating isn’t foolproof either, CERT’s Fithen said.

Because each software maker tends to produce and distribute its own updates, major bottlenecks can occur when several companies attempt to update at the same time.

Still, if any technology is going to solve the problem, automated updates are at the top of the list, Fithen said.

"Scale is a problem that we know how to deal with," he said. "Getting people to do something that they don’t want to is not."

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